

## Tyndale & the Old Testament

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Tyndale took God's "iron pen" to the Old Testament (Job 19:24), first translating Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy (1530) and Jonah (1531). He suffered shipwreck while carrying this precious cargo as, "The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood" (Rev. 12:15). Yet God would "preserve them" and polish the Old Testament further with the aid of Miles Coverdale (see Foxe, vol. 5, p. 120). Tyndale's later imprisonment provided focused time to translate a revision of Genesis, plus his translation of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 Chronicles. This portion was not printed until the publication of the Matthew's Bible (McGrath, p. 34). Although Coverdale is generally credited with the work from Ezra through Malachi for this edition, the letters, W.T., over two inches in height, close the Old Testament.

### **BURNING** "Epistles of Christ" (2 Cor. 3:2, 3)

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Tyndale's work was dangerous to own because of the "Constitutions of Oxford" which prohibited the translation or ownership of the English Bible. "A royal injunction of 1530, which forbade buying or owning an English Bible" stated,

"Finally it appeared that having of the whole Scripture is not necessary to Christian men; and like as the having of the Scripture in the vulgar tongue and in the common people's hands...hath been thought not expedient...**[We forbid] the Scripture** to be divulged and communicate[d] to the people in the English tongue at this time..." (Daniell, p. xxix; Henry Guppy, *Miles Coverdale and the English Bible*, Manchester: The University of Manchester Press, 1935, pp. 7, 8).

A “systematic search for copies” was made and “great baskets of the New Testaments were brought out and burned.” “[S]o rigorous was the search for copies carried out that only two [actually 3] copies of the first edition have survived” (Guppy, p. 7). The English crown even secured the help of European monarchs to search out and destroy Tyndale Bibles on the continent.

Although Tyndale’s scriptures were burned “daily,” they “achieved a wide circulation, and...there was little that could be done to prevent it” (Christopher Anderson, *The Annals of the English Bible*, vol. 1, London: William Pickering, 1845, p. 122; McGrath, p. 84). The New Testament of Tyndale, printed on the continent, “came thick and threefold over into England.” By 1531 the Bishop of London complained because “there are so many New Testaments abroad” (Fexe, vol. 4, p. 670). “In spite of all opposition the book was being everywhere talked about and read” (Smyth, pp. 94-95). The “two thousand translation errors” the Catholic Bishop claimed to find were no doubt the corrections Tyndale had made in the corrupt Latin Vulgate (McGrath, p. 83).

**F**ires of persecution burned the New Testament truths into the very hearts of the people. Fexe describes person after person, burned at the stake for owning the scriptures in English. The following are but a few of the *hundreds* of martyrs and *thousands* of Bibles burned.

- ❖ Thomas Curson was martyred in 1530 for “having the New Testament of Tyndale’s **translation**, and another book containing certain books of the Old Testament, **translated into English...**”
- ❖ Lawrence Staple was martyred in 1531, “For having the Testament in **English**, the five books of Moses...”
- ❖ Christopher, a Dutchman from Antwerp, was martyred in 1531, “[F]or selling certain New Testaments in **English.**”

- ❖ Walter Kery was martyred in 1531, because he “had and used...The Testament in **English**...”
- ❖ John Mel was martyred in 1532, “For having and reading the New Testament in **English**, the Psalter in English...” (Foxye, vol. 5, pp. 29, 32, 37, 38).

A *translated* Bible, must be alive; the devil’s “band of soldiers” will not try to stop the Dead Bible Society (Mat. 27:27). The Catholic inquisitor-general remarked, “It doesn’t matter whether those we execute are really guilty or not. What matters is that the people are terrified by our trials” (Bobrick, p. 134). Today, some consciences are slowly seared into silence by tongues “set on fire of hell” (James 3:6).

- ❖ **Tyndale** himself was burned at the stake in October, 1536. When the flames rise, before Tyndale dies, he sighs, ‘*Lord, open the King of England’s eyes.*’ And God answered his cries. The very year of his death, his New Testament was **PRINTED in England** (Dore, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 22). This brings to mind Jesus’ promise to the apostles and martyrs.

“But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is **not ye** that speak, **but the Spirit** of your Father which **speaketh** in you” (Matt. 10: 19, 20).

If God could inspire, through his Spirit, the dying words of martyred apostles and saints, speaking in a vernacular tongue (e.g. Aramaic), how much more would “**the Spirit**” speak, and “**not ye**,” the words of vernacular Bibles, which claim to be **the word of God**.

Tyndale authored numerous books himself. These reveal he was, in *style*, lacking the majesty seen in his Bible, but “in doctrine showing uncorruptness” (Titus 2:7). His views merit re-reading to encourage and edify today’s reader. Topics include: Translation, Salvation, Soul Winning, the Bible, Christian Life, Love and Marriage, and the identity of the Antichrist.

*J*esus Christ was Tyndale’s treasure and his translation a measure of his heart. He stated,

“I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give our reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one **syllable** of **God’s word** against my conscience, nor would do this day, if all that is in earth, whether it be honour, pleasure, or **riches**, might be given me” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 129).

Tyndale saw Christ’s blood as his treasure and his own trials as nothing compared to his sins.

“[T]he cause of evil rulers is the sin of the subjects, as testifieth the Scripture. And the cause of false preachers is, that the people have no love unto the truth, saith Paul in 1 Thes. 2. We be all sinners a hundred times greater than all that we suffer. Let us, therefore, each forgive others...For **Christ** died for sinners, and is their Saviour, and his **blood is their treasure**, to pay for their sins (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 131).

Today predators prowl for profit, like well paid editors of modern versions, who chop the last sonorous syllable from so many KJV words, in exchange for a pocket full of change. They ~~erode~~, not polish, the Bible. Should we trade “gold tried in the fire” for “pieces of silver” (Matt. 27:9), though lady *liberty’s* face be engraved on the silver? The King of England said in 1536,

“It is very like that these, who prowl for nothing but profit, will right gladly pull down all such things as their forefathers made, only for the increase of money” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 139).

Such new version editors would do well to have mercy upon their own souls. Profit has but brief allure. The stroke of God is slow but sure — the sinner’s cure — the word kept pure. As martyr John Lambert warned in 1538 —

“[W]olves must be driven away by the barking of dogs” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 206).

## *Tyndale* on Salvation

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In his *Preface* to the New Testament, Tyndale said one must have, “steadfast faith and trust in almighty God, to obtain all the mercy that he hath promised us, through the deserving and merits of **Christ’s blood only**, without all respect to our own works...” (William Tyndale, *Pentateuch, Jonah, and NT*, 1530-1534, Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997, p. 3).

“[F]aith in Christ’s blood is counted righteousness and a purging of all sin before God” (Tyndale, *Chadwick*, p. 7).

“And such a heart, trusting in Christ’s blood, is accepted for full righteousness, and his weakness, infirmity, and frailty is pardoned, and his sins are not looked upon...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 573).

“Acknowledge thyself a sinner, that thou mayest be justified” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 584).

“In the faith which we have in Christ and in God’s promises, find we mercy, life, favour, and peace. In the law we find death, damnation, and wrath...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 570).

“There is no ear so righteous, that can abide the hearing of the law...But Christ (that is to say, the gospel, the promises and testament that God hath made in Christ), healeth the ear and conscience, which the law hath hurt” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 581).

“The New Testament is an everlasting covenant made unto the children of God through faith in Christ, upon the deservings of Christ. Where eternal life is promised to all that believe...” (Bobrick, p. 134).

“The water of baptism taketh not away our sin...Christ hath healed us by the bath of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 592).

## **Tyndale: Preaching & Soul Winning**

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Tyndale “began to preach, and make many friends among the laity, but none among ecclesiastics” (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, New York: Funk and Wagnalls,

1912, s.v. Tyndale, William, p. 47). He “stirred up some of the local authorities” by preaching “in the common place...(in front of the church)...” (Bobrick, p. 89).

“Such was the power of his doctrine, and the sincerity of his life, that during the time of his imprisonment (which endured a year and a half), it is said, he converted his keeper, the keeper’s daughter, and others of his household...Notwithstanding, he had so preached to them there who had him in charge...that they reported of him, that if he were not a good Christian man, they knew not whom they might take to be one” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 127).

## *Tyndale* on Good Works

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Tyndale warned,

“It were better for thee a thousand fold, that thou hadst been a sinner, and never had done good deed, and to acknowledge thine offences and evil life unto God, asking mercy with a good heart, lamenting thy sins, than to have done good works, and in them to put thy trust, thinking that therefore God were bound to thee. There is nothing which (after the manner of speaking) bindeth God, but firm and steadfast faith and trust in him and his promises: for we can show unto God no greater honour, than to have faith and trust in him; for whosoever doth that, he confesseth that God is true, good, mighty, and merciful” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 595).

“If God had promised heaven unto us because of our works, we should ever then be unsure of our salvation: for we should never know how much, nor how long, we should labour to be saved, and should ever be in fear that we had done too little, and so we should never die joyfully. But God would assure us of heaven by his promise, to the intent we should be certain and sure, for he is the truth, and cannot lie; and also to the intent that we should have trust and hope in him. And, notwithstanding that after the greatness and multitude of our sins it seem to us a thing impossible, yet always we must believe it without any doubt, because of his sure promise; and whosoever doth this, he may joyfully die, and abide the judgment of God, which, else, were intolerable” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 597).

“Works done in faith be only pleasant unto God, and worthy to be called good works; for they be the works of the Holy Ghost, that dwelleth in us by this faith” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 594).

“If thy faith induce thee not to do good works, then hast not thou the right faith, thou doest but only think that thou hast it... Therefore, when thou art not moved by faith unto the love of God, and by the love of God unto good works, thou hast no faith, but faith is dead in thee...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 595).

“I serve thee not because thou art my master or my king, for hope of reward or fear of pain, but for the love of Christ. For the



children of faith are under no law, as thou seest in the epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the first of Timothy, but are free. The Spirit of Christ hath written the lively law of love in their hearts, which driveth them to work of their own accord, freely and willingly, for the great love's sake only which they see in Christ; and therefore, need they no law to compel them" (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 580).

"All good works must be done freely, with a single eye, without respect of any thing, and that no profit be sought thereby...[W]e, with all our works, may not seek our own profit, neither in this world nor in heaven; but must and ought freely to work to honour God withal, and...seek our neighbor's profit, and do him service..." (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 571).

"He looketh with what heart thou workest, and not what thou workest; how thou acceptest the degree that he hath put thee in, and not of what degree thou art, whether thou be an apostle or a shoemaker...Now if thou compare deed to deed, there is great difference betwixt washing of dishes and preaching the word of God: but, as touching to please God, none at all" (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 575, 576).

## *Tyndale on the Bible*

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**"Seek the word of God** in all things, and without the word of God do nothing, though it appear ever so glorious...**Beware of good intent**...Peter, of a good mind, and of a good

affection or zeal, chide Christ, because he said that he must go to Jerusalem and there be slain. But Christ called him Satan for his labour, and said that he perceived not godly things, but worldly. Of a good intent, and of a fervent affection to Christ, the sons of Zebedee would have had fire come down from heaven to consume the Samaritans; but Christ rebuked them, saying, that they wist not of what spirit they were...Peter smote Malchus of a good zeal, but Christ condemned his deed. The very Jews, of a good intent and a good zeal, slew Christ, and persecuted the apostles, as Paul beareth them record. I bear them record (saith he), that they have a fervent mind to God-ward, but not according to knowledge.”

“It is another thing, then, to do of a good mind, and to do of knowledge. Labour for knowledge, that thou mayest know God’s will, and what he would have thee to do. Our mind, intent, and affection or zeal, are blind...and for that cause hath God made a testament between him and us, wherein is contained both what he would have us to do, and what he would have us to ask him. See, therefore, that thou do nothing to please God withal, but that he commandeth; neither ask any thing of him but that he hath promised thee” (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 576, 577).

## *Tyndale on the Christian Life*

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“[P]eople look as well unto the living as unto the preaching, and are hurt at once if

the living disagree, and fall from the faith, and believe not the word” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 579). “Look wherein thou canst best keep the commandments; thither get thyself there and abide. If we have infirmities that draw us from the laws of God, let us cure them with the remedies that God hath made. If thou burn, marry; for God hath promised thee no chastity, as long as thou mayest use the remedy that he hath ordained; no more than he hath promised to slack thine hunger without meat. Now, to ask of God more than he hath promised, cometh of a false faith...” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 581).

“Paul biddeth us mortify all our evil desires and carnal lusts, as uncleanness, covetousness, wrath, blasphemy, detraction, pride, and other like vices. And unto the Romans, he saith, Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies: that is to say, albeit we cannot live without the motion of such evil desires, yet we shall not suffer them to rule in us, but shall mortify them in resisting them” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 596).

## *Tyndale* on Love & Marriage

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”Our Saviour Christ hath commanded nothing so straitly, as to love one another...then how much more should the man and wife love together? But there are but few that know how to love the one the other as they ought to do. If thou love thy wife only because she is thy wife, and because she serveth, and pleaseth thee after the flesh, for beauty, birth, riches, and such-

like, this is no love before God. Of such love speaketh not Paul, for such love is among harlots, yea among brute beasts: but thou shalt love her because she is thy sister in the Christian faith; and because she is inheritor together with thee in the glory of God; and because ye serve together one God...Thou shalt love her for her virtues, as shamefastness, chastity, and diligence, sadness, patience, temperance, secrecy, obedience, and other godly virtues” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 598).

## *Tyndale on the Antichrist & Rome*

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“I will show thee an evident reason, that thou mayest know without doubting who is the very Antichrist: and this argument may be grounded upon their furious **persecution**, which Paul doth confirm, writing to the Galatians...But, as he that was born after the flesh did persecute him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now” (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 585).

*The Cambridge History of the Bible* said the notes placed in the margin of Tyndale’s Bible “satirized popes and bishops and pungently attacked many of the distinguishing marks of contemporary Catholicism” (*Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 146). His notes on Genesis 4 compared Cain to “the pope which in all things maketh himself equal with God.” His *Prologues* to Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are mainly an attack on the corrupt priests and sacraments of the Catholic and Episcopal churches. He calls them “extortioner...pickpurse” (Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. pp. 71, 72). In the margin of Tyndale’s Exodus 32:35 he writes, “The Pope’s bull [pronouncements] slayeth more than Aaron’s calf.”

For Exodus 36:5 he notes, “When will the pope say Hoo (hold!) and forbid an offering for the building of St. Peter’s Church?...Never until they have all” (Smyth, p. 99). Near Numbers 23:8 (“How shall I curse whom God curseth not...”) he replies, “The pope can tell how.” For Deut. 23:18 (“Thou shall not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God...”) he quips, “The pope will take tribute of them yet and bishops, and abbots desire no better tenants [than whores]” (Bobrick, p. 118). The truth of Tyndale’s charges led Archbishop Cranmer in 1535 to issue an injunction requiring Catholic monks to “attend a scripture reading for an hour daily throughout the year, to cover the whole of the Bible from start to finish” (Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Thomas Cranmer*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, p. 128).

## *Miles Coverdale*

1488-1568

*M*iles Coverdale and Tyndale were “labourers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9). Much like Tyndale, “Coverdale...left the monastery in order to give himself entirely to evangelical preaching.” “Coverdale was in hearty accord with Tindale and others in the defiance of the Romanist...” (Guppy, pp. 5, 17). He “began to preach against confession and the worship of images” (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, 1910 ed., s.v. Coverdale, Miles, p. 343). “All accounts agree in his remarkable popularity as a preacher” (Schaff-Herzog, s.v. Coverdale, Miles, p. 291).

Due to persecution he left England for Europe, and according to Foxe, began polishing the English Old Testament with Tyndale in Hamburg. Having come out of the corrupt Catholic church, like Tyndale, he could discern the theological differences between the pure Bible and corrupt Catholic editions. Consequently, he issued a book

in 1531 called *The Old God and the Newe* (Guppy, p. 6; Riplinger, *New Age Bible Versions*, p. 39).

Because Coverdale was “exercised to discern both good and evil,” he was hired by Antwerp merchant, Jacob van Meteren, to oversee and polish the first complete PRINTED English Bible (Heb. 5:14). It was published in October, 1535 and today is commonly called the Coverdale Bible. He wisely separated the non-canonical Apocryphal books from the Old Testament text. Although he dedicated it to Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, it did not receive royal approval for distribution. However, in answer to Tyndale’s dying prayer of 1536, its second edition of 1537 was “set forth with the King’s most gracious license” (Guppy, p. 17).

## *John Rogers*

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### *The Matthew’s Bible*

*J*ohn Rogers was led to Christ by Tyndale. Rogers then worked “in company with that worthy servant and martyr of God William Tyndale, and with Miles Coverdale, who both, for the hatred they bare to popish superstition and idolatry, and love to true religion, had forsaken the country.” According to Foxe, Rogers joined with them in “translating the Bible,” which is entitled, *The Translation of Thomas Matthew*” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 591).

In 1538 there were two printings of the English Bible in legal circulation - Coverdale’s 1535-1537 and Matthew’s 1537. The latter was printed by Grafton and Whitchurch in Hapsburg. Although it contained the translation work of Tyndale and Coverdale, it was printed with the pseudonym, *Thomas Matthew’s Bible*, because Tyndale’s name was ill-favored with King Henry VIII at that time. It was printed with the king’s approval and imprinted with a line in red which said: “Set forth with the king’s most gracious

license.” The King permitted the Thomas Matthew Bible “to be sold and read of every person without danger of any Act, Proclamation, or Ordinance...” (Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 117). In November, 1539 the king ruled that *other* Bibles could not be printed. The Matthew’s Bible contained Tyndale’s final New Testament. It used Tyndale’s Pentateuch (1530, not 1534), with little change, and added some of Tyndale’s Old Testament that had never been published before (Joshua to 2 Chronicles). Coverdale’s translation was used for the remainder (e.g. Ezra and Malachi with some revision to the middle of Job and only a bit thereafter). The book of Jonah is Coverdale’s, not Tyndale’s. Rogers himself added his own translation of the Apocrypha, which Tyndale would not translate (*Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 150).

## The Great Bible

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*M*iles Coverdale was asked by King Henry VIII’s representatives, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell (who bore the expense), to compile and fine tune an English Bible without the anti-Catholic notes used in the Matthew’s Bible. It had penetrating notes such as:

“The Pope’s part is cast out and given to the sword,  
When the church is measured with God’s word...”  
(Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 123).

The Great Bible was not a slavish re-printing of earlier Coverdale editions, nor was it entirely Tyndale’s edition; it shows *more* polishing by Coverdale. King Henry VIII licensed the university of Paris to print it. “The Inquisitor-General got notice of the project” and burned most of the first 2,500 copies (Smyth, pp. 109, 108). The printers fled to England, printing plates in hand, and reprinted it there in 1539. It was called the Bible of ‘the great Volume’ and

today is referred to as the ‘Great Bible.’ Within two years, 20,000 copies were sold. Although Coverdale’s and Matthew’s Bibles were licensed, the Great Bible was the first (in the 1500s) “authorized to be used and frequented in every church in the kingdom” (Smyth, p. 108). The title page of the Great Bible called it,

“**The Bible in English** in the largest and greatest Volume, **authorized**...to be frequented and used in every church” (Guppy, p. 22).

For a time King Henry VIII permitted the free use of the Bible.

“Being desirous to have our people attaining the knowledge of God’s word, whereby they will the better honour him...as by the granting to them the free and liberal use of the Bible, in our own maternal English tongue...” (Dore, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., pp. 45-46).

The second edition of the Great Bible was often called Cranmer’s Bible because he wrote its excellent *Prologue*. It commends the scriptures to all, including the “old...unlearned...poor...laymen...tenants ...[and] widows.”

“[T]he scripture to be read of all sorts and kinds of people, and in the vulgar tongue...” (Great Bible, 1540, Cambridge: Chadwyck-Healey, 1997, p. 10).

The Bible was so popular, Cranmer said, “every company of men, every assembly of women is filled with such talk” (Great Bible, Chadwyck, p. 11). Churches were ordered to purchase copies and place them “whereat your parishioners may most commodiously [comfortably] resort to the same and read it” (Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 155). They were usually placed



in the choir or the entry vestibule. The notion that it was always ‘chained’ to the *pulpit* is false. Churches were not locked and the Bible was “for the common use of the people” (Dore, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 50).

## **A**pocrypha

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Like Wycliffe, the translators of the 1500s knew, and stated in print, that the *Apocrypha* was not the word of God.

- ✓ **Tyndale** would not translate the Apocrypha.
- ✓ **Coverdale** removed the Apocrypha from the Old Testament scriptures. He prefaced his intertestamental section saying, these books “are not reckoned to be of like authority with the other books of the Bible neither are they found in the Canon of the Hebrew...[and] are not judged among the doctors to be of like reputation with the other scripture...And the chief cause thereof is this: there be many places in them, that seem to be repugnant unto the open and manifest truth in the other books of the Bible” (Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 110).
- ✓ Rogers’ Thomas Matthew’s Bible said, “the books called Apocrypha...are not found in the Hebrew nor in the Chaldee” (Dore, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 116).

## **ENTER** the **JESUITS** & Persecution (1535-1547)

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“The coming of the **Jesuits** forboded future trouble” (*The Columbia Encyclopedia*, William Bridgwater ed., NY: Columbia University Press, 1950, s.v. Henry VIII, p. 883).

When Henry VIII wanted to wisk a new wife to the altar, he *altered* his spiritual views once again. He beheaded godly Queen Anne Boleyn in 1536 and Lord Protector Thomas Cromwell in 1540. Once their strong Christian influence was ‘cut off,’ wicked men convinced the king to suppress the sale and use of Bibles, especially those with “annotations or prologues” (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 258). Earlier, in 1535, King Henry VIII had given the Baptists “twelve days to depart out of the realm under pain of death.” His 1538 proclamation echoed,

“Anabaptists and the like who sell books of false doctrine, and all who lately rebaptize themselves, are ordered from the kingdom or shall burn at the stake” (cited in Bill Bradley, *Purified Seven Times*, Claysburg, PA: Revival Fires Publishers, 1998, p. 60).

Once again many Christians were persecuted and burned at the stake.

- ❖ In 1541 “great multitudes” of people stood and listened as John Porter read one of the six Bibles in a London church vestibule. The large crowds he drew incited the envy of the bishops who sent him to prison where he died a torturous death at their hands (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 452).
- ❖ Andrew Kempe and others were martyred in 1541, “for disturbing the service of the church, with brabbling of the New Testament” in protest to the Catholic practice of having idols (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 443).
- ❖ William Plaine was martyred in 1541 for “loud reading the **English** Bible” to expose false Catholic practices (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 443).
- ❖ A man named Stile was burned at the stake and a copy of the book of Revelation was “fastened unto the stake, to be burned with him” (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 655).

- ❖ Thomas Forret was burned at the stake in Scotland for preaching the gospel. He said “I have read the New Testament and the Old, and all the epistles and the gospels...” (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 622).

Coverdale defied King Henry’s ‘Six Articles’ which forbade the clergy to marry. He finally fled England again in 1540 as the Christian cause grew in disfavour with the king. On the continent he became a Lutheran pastor and later worked on the Geneva Bible with John Knox, William Whittingham, John Foxe and others. In 1542 Coverdale’s Bible was specifically prohibited by royal proclamation. Between 1541 and 1547 no Bibles were printed in England.

In 1543 an Act of Parliament took away the right to use any Bible except the Great Bible. In 1544 it specifically outlawed Tyndale’s work.

“By the same parliament, moreover, many things were provided for the advancement of **popery**, under the colour of religion; so that all manner of books of the **Old and New Testament** bearing the name William Tyndal, or any others, having prologues, or containing any matters, annotations...were debarred...In the same parliament, furthermore, it was provided, that the text of the New Testament, or of the Bible, being **prohibited** to all women, artificers...and labourers; yet it was permitted...to noblemen...and gentlewomen...” (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 527).

The Great New Testament was printed once again in 1546. Although it did not contain the objectionable notes of the Matthew’s Bible, the bishops did not like it or its preface, so sales finally were stopped (Foxye, vol. 5, pp. 410-413; McGrath, pp. 89-91).

**Death Sentence & Salvation?**

On July 8 of 1546 King Henry VIII set forth a proclamation, to go into effect on September 1, rescinding altogether the private use of the Bible and forbidding that anyone should read or own one. All Bibles were “to be openly burned,” along with a long list of Christian books (Foxye, vol. 5, pp. 565, 566). When Henry penned his name on that proclamation, he was signing his own death certificate. After the passing of a dozen weeks, he would become gravely ill and pass away on January 28, 1547. But, like the thief on the cross before he died, *at the last moment*, Henry VIII began to “consider his life past” and asked **“is the mercy of Christ able to pardon me, all my sins, though they were greater than they be.”** His advisors called for Archbishop Cranmer, who arrived when the king could no longer speak.

“Notwithstanding, perceiving Dr. Cranmer to be come, he, reaching his hand to Dr. Cranmer, did hold him fast, but could utter no word unto him, and scarce was able to make any sign. Then the archbishop, exhorting him to put his trust in Christ, and to call upon his mercy, desired him, though **he could not speak**, yet to give some token with his eyes or with his hand, that he **trusted in the Lord**. Then the king, holding him with his hand, **did wring his hand in his as hard as he could**; and so, shortly after, departed...” (Foxye, vol. 5, p. 689).

Reaping what he had sewn, the king had been struck dumb and now was “brought to silence” (Isa. 15:1). The Christ and the scriptures he had so stifled offered his only hope.

## King Edward VI (reigned: 1547-1553)

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The heir of Henry VIII, nine-year-old Prince Edward VI, brought six years of peace and the printing of Bibles once again to England. When crowned King, Edward was given three swords, symbolizing the three countries he ruled. He asked where the *fourth* sword was —

“The Bible, the sword of the Spirit, and to be preferred before these swords” (W. Kenneth Connolly, *The Indestructible Book*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996, p. 154).


Edward VI, “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord,” like godly King Josiah, who began ruling Judah at the age of eight. Like Josiah, he returned “the book of the law in the house of the LORD” (2 Kings 22). Thirty-one printers in England set about printing only Bibles (Guppy, p. 24). He commanded also that “the whole Bible of the largest volume in English and...the paraphrase of Erasmus” be placed in churches for, “every person to read the same as the very **lively** word of God” (Fexe, vol. 5, p. 708). Through the kindness of the Lord and the generosity of Jewel and David Smith, this author has one of the few remaining original editions (now kept in a bank vault). Its preface shows strong Christian convictions and marked anti-papery; the *Paraphrase of Erasmus* shows perfect Christian orthodoxy.

In 1547 Edward brought back the “old British custom of reading the Scripture in a language ‘understood of the people’” (Dore, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., p. 52). He said Sunday services should consist “in hearing the word of God read and taught.” He charged that every Sunday at every service pastors should “read, one chapter of the New Testament in English...[and] one chapter of the Old Testament.” “Few sermons...but he

would be at them.” He also charged pastors to “comfort promptly their flock with the **lively** word of God,” if any members were “sick and in peril of death.” He exhorted pastors to “exercise themselves in teaching youth to read and write” and “at all times as they shall have leisure, they shall hear or read somewhat of Holy Scripture...” (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 711, 710, 700, 713, 708).

Coverdale returned to England in 1548 and was made chaplain to King Edward VI. He “assisted in the translation” of the *Paraphrase of Erasmus* (1549 edition of Whitchurch, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume; Guppy, p. 25). Coverdale took part in King Edward’s reforming measures. He helped —

“Edward the Sixth, utterly to banish all popery forth of England, and to receive in true religion, setting God’s gospel at liberty” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 592).

According to Exodus 20:4 Edward commanded that churches “take down and destroy” all Catholic images, like crucifixes (a cross with an image of Jesus on it). Communion was returned to the early form of ordinary bread, instead of the Romish “round” sun  symbol wafers. Simple tables replaced altars (Foxe, vol. 5, pp. 707, 717; vol. 6, pp. 4, 703).

Edward died at the age of 15. The authentic *Chronicle* of that period reports:

“And he was **poisoned**, as everybody says” (*Chronicles of the Tudor Kings*, David Loades, ed., Godalming, Surrey: CLB International, 1997, p. 245).

King Edward had decreed before his death that the next ruler should be Lady Jane Gray, a godly Christian relative. However, his sister Mary, with much public support, took

the crown. Foxe mentions that Mary even received support from ‘gospellers,’ who were tricked with false promises of ‘unity’ and ‘freedom from religious persecution.’ Lady Jane said the following while in prison and before Queen Mary beheaded her:

“[F]aith, as Paul said, only justifieth...I affirm that faith only saveth...I am, by the blood of Christ, which he shed for me on the cross, made partaker of the everlasting kingdom...I ground my faith on God’s word...I die a true Christian woman, and that I do not look to be saved by no other means, but only by the mercy of God, in the blood of his only Son Jesus Christ” (Foxe, vol. 6, pp. 416-424).

## *Bloody Queen Mary*

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Reign of terror 1553-1558

“[Q]ueen Mary, obtaining the crown, banished the gospel and true religion, and brought the Antichrist of Rome, with his idolatry and superstition” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 592).

Foxe said, “[T]he manifold iniquities of Englishmen deserved another plague...” in the reign of Queen Mary (Foxe, vol. 5, p. 699). He adds,

“Alas! You know the cause of all these plagues fallen upon us [*Foxe witnessed it*], and of the success which God’s adversaries have daily, is for our not loving God’s word. You know how that we were but gospellers in lips, and not in life” (Foxe, vol. 7, p. 209).

He called Queen Mary and the false religion of her day a “just plague for the little love which the English nation did bear to the blessed **word of God**, which had been so **plentifully offered** unto them” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 613).

In 1554 the reading of Scripture was by Act of Parliament placed under severe restrictions. To get rid of what the Catholics called, the “heretically translated Bible,” Mary banished every “preacher, printer, bookseller” in 1554 (Foxe, vol. 6, pp. 504, 430). The Great Bibles and *Paraphrases of Erasmus* were removed from the churches and **destroyed**; yet to glorify his word, the Lord hid one for this writer’s collection.

Because of Bloody Mary’s continued persecution of Christians, “[T]he prisons in England were becoming right Christian schools and churches” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 684). Coverdale, who had been Bishop of Ely under Edward, was put out of office and imprisoned. He was finally able to flee to the continent through the intervention of Denmark’s King, Christian III.

King Edward had wisely removed from churches any “picture of Christ” and painted scripture verses over them. But, Mary, Mary, quite contrary, made a mandate to “abolish and extinguish such manner of Scriptures” which were “painted upon the church-walls” (Foxe, vol. 6, p. 565).

In her short six-year reign, bloody Queen Mary brutally **murdered about 300 Christians**, who would not trade their faultless English Bible and faith in Christ, for a false hope in her frail pope. She died a miserable death at the *immature* age of 42.

“...**bloody** and deceitful men  
shall not live out  
half their days;”  
Psalm 55:23



